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Life Without Government: It's Not As Distant As You Think

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Note

This is a remarkable and straightforward illustration of the fact that, in daily life, "non-violence is the norm, and that voluntary cooperation is in fact how most people actually live." Not paying attention to this simple reality probably is the result of a constant indoctrination, from an early age, performed by the state that has made us believe that, without the state, life would be extremely insecure and that we need the state to protect us from violence. However, as remarked by the historian J.P. Taylor "In the state of nature which Hobbes imagined, violence was the only law, and life was 'nasty, brutish and short'. Though individuals never lived in this state of nature, the Great Powers of Europe have always done so." (A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918, 1954)

For an historical short presentation of your enslavement by the state see this [video](#) by Stefan Molyneux.

I am always astounded when someone rejects even the possibility of a stateless society by demanding that I supply proof such a society has ever existed, or could ever work.

"But I can give you an example of a perfectly functioning non-violent society right this minute!" I reply.

"Oh yeah?" my interrogator will demand skeptically. "Where?"

"Well, it's... you!"

A great flurry of confusion always follows this very simple statement. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, are you married?" I say.

"Yes, but..."

"Did you force your spouse to marry you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"When you proposed, did you hold a gun to her temple and threaten to pull the trigger if she didn't marry you?"

"No, but..."

"Do you have a job?"

"Yes..."

"And when you went to that job interview, did you hold a knife to your interviewer's throat until you got the job?"

"No..."

"Did you go to school?"

"Of course! But what..."

"And if you wanted an 'A', did you work hard, or did you kidnap your teacher's daughter and hold her hostage until you got the grade you wanted?"

"No, but..."

"Do you shoplift when you go to stores? Do you leave restaurants without paying the bill? Do you 'pump and run' at gas stations? If you want to have a party, do you herd your guests up at gunpoint?"

The answer is always the same. Of course not! Over the past twenty years, over thousands of conversations, I have never once met anyone who regularly used violence. I've met a few people who'd been in bar fights, heard tales of a few bad marriages and seen some fairly nasty parents, but I have never once met a single person who regularly and systematically used violence to force obedience out of others.

So naturally, I am quite confused when people demand that I produce historical proof of functioning non-violent societies. It's like a panting man asking me to produce proof of the existence of air.

You do not use violence in your life. You do not force people to do your bidding. You do not shoot or stab or poison people who disagree with you.

And I would guess that you don't know anyone else who does.

Just think about that for a moment. Think of your close and extended family, everyone at work, all your managers, employees and customers. Think of the man who flies your plane, the woman who fixes your car, the teenager who delivers your newspaper. Think of the thousands and thousands of people you have met during the course of your life. How many of the people you have met as an adult have ever used violence against you?

I bet none.

Now that's quite remarkable when you think about it. Just looking at your own life, you can see a community of hundreds or thousands of people composed entirely of pacifists. A community composed of people who resolve all their disputes without pulling out knives or guns.

People generally respond to this, of course, by arguing that people don't use force because the State has courts and the police and so on, and without State protection we'd be in that mythical state of nature, stealing and killing each other at will.

That's an interesting objection, but I have a hard time taking it very seriously, because all I have to ask in return is this:

"Have you ever actually tried to use the State justice system?"

Of course not. If they had, they wouldn't speak so blithely about how the 'thin blue line' is all that separates us from cannibalism. And it's not fear of the police that keeps you from dumping your garbage on the lawn next door, but rather a natural desire to live in peace with those around you.

And sure, there are people who use violence to get their way – but you can protect yourself against criminals. You can't protect yourself against the State.

Does this approach prove that a stateless society will work flawlessly? Of course not. However, I hope it helps you see that in your life, a stateless, pacifistic society works beautifully! I don't expect that this approach will convince you of the practicality of a stateless society as a whole, but in the society that you live in – surely the most important to you – it does highlight the simple fact that non-violence is the norm, and that voluntary cooperation is in fact how most people actually live.

In other words, if we actually look at our own lives, and set aside propaganda and fear, it becomes clear that stateless societies are not only possible in the future, but alive and well in the here and now. To see the

future of freedom, we need only look in the mirror today.